

SPECIFICATION AMENDMENT

Please replace the paragraph at page 26 line 19 – page 27 line 10 with the following replacement paragraph:

As for feature c) and d), the wire 402 and its associated assembly 408, and the drive mechanism 410 are ordinarily placed within the housing 406. A shield 416 covers the entrance aperture 406. When a card is in position for sealing, the motor 412 is energized and the motor operates to move the wire assembly 408 down and at an angle through the aperture 404 [[406]]. This action causes the shield 416 to move out of the way to a retracted position. A spring-loaded pad 414 in the wire assembly 408 and located in front of the wire 402 makes contact with the edge of a card 100 and preloads or biases the cards 100 using a coil spring 415 against a fixed structure or stop in the instrument. The fixed structure is in the form of a rail 604 extending lengthwise along the face of the incubation station 600 housing 602. Other constructions are of course possible. The wire 402 then cuts through the transfer tube to produce uniform stubs lengths as the cards 100 are moved past the stationary sealer wire 402. After the sealing operation is completed, the motor 412 is energized to retract the wire assembly 408 into the housing 406. As it does so, the rotating shield 416 retracts by gravity to a closed position covering the aperture 404. This covering of the aperture 404 prevents the user from gaining access to the retracted hot wire 402.

Please replace the paragraph at page 28 line 15- page 29 line 4 with the following replacement paragraph:

As the hot wire assembly 408 and mounting-block 426 is retracted, the rotating shield 416 drops down by gravity and covers the housing opening 404. The shield 416 has a tang 430

and flange 452. The flange 452 is positioned inside the elongate opening 454 in the housing 406 when the unit is assembled. The flange 452 contacts the shoulder 426 of the mounting-block 426 as the block 426 nears the retracted home position. The tang 430 and flange 452 prevents the user from lifting the shield 416 and gaining access to the hot wire. When the sealer motor 412 is energized, it causes the pin 462 to slide through the slot 460 in the drive mechanism 410 and thereby extends the hot wire mounting-block 422. The protective shield 416 ~~[[406]]~~ is pushed open by the contact between the face of the block 422, which causes the shield to rotate upward, exposing the hot wire 402 and preload shoe 414. The microcontroller supplies a constant current to the wire 402 sufficient to produce the proper temperature for cutting through the transfer tubes as the cards pass by, melting the plastic and leaving a small stub of the tube to seal the interior of the card from the atmosphere.

Please replace the paragraph at page 35 lines 15-21 with the following replacement paragraph:

Basically, the transport system ~~400~~ 1000 includes the carrier 200 and a transport subassembly 1002 that moves the carrier 200 back and forth. The transport subassembly 1002 includes a cassette-engaging member 1004 in the form of a block that that is adapted to engage the carrier in the manner described below. The transport subassembly 1002 is constructed and arranged such that it moves the block 1004 and the carrier 200 back and forth along a single longitudinal axis between the carrier loading and unloading station 16, the sealing station 400, and the incubation loading station 500.